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22 February 1971

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: 19 February Meeting of the "Indochina Steering Group"

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1. [REDACTED] noted that Kissinger had asked the Agency to provide an unclassified paper on Communist use of Sihanoukville, presumably for release to the general public. OER has put such a paper together, essentially by removing classifications on earlier papers. [REDACTED] pointed out 25X1A two pitfalls that are to be called to Kissinger's attention: (1) some of the information could be embarrassing to the present government in Phnom Penh because it shows that the operation was possible only with the connivance of high-level Cambodians, including some now in power; (2) the results of the allied cross-border operations last spring look less impressive in the light of the tonnages of supplies and equipment delivered to Sihanoukville.

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2. [REDACTED] reported on continuing efforts to improve our [REDACTED] of the North Vietnamese military problem; it now looks as if we have indeed lost some [REDACTED] SAVA is carrying the ball in working with other agencies to come up with new collection possibilities. One method being considered, according to [REDACTED] is the use of [REDACTED]

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3. There was a long and not very satisfactory discussion centered on the discovery of [REDACTED] and to some extent [REDACTED] pushed hard for getting [REDACTED] in the hope this would tell us more about what the Chinese are doing there. The rest of us were skeptical about the efficacy of this course. It was clear to me that no one in the room, including myself, knew enough about the

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status and locations of [REDACTED] to discuss this subject properly. I noted that a whole team of people from OSR were working [REDACTED] that very day, and that it would be worthwhile to hear them out before this group takes any action.

4. [REDACTED] reported that [REDACTED] from OER was doing very well [REDACTED] trying to learn more about the Sihanoukville supply operation. He meets daily with [REDACTED] and apparently has turned up a good deal of new data. [REDACTED] noted, not altogether in jest, that [REDACTED] is coming up with material that may yet show the road network through Laos and north-eastern Cambodia was the "basic" Communist supply system.

5. [REDACTED] reported on a series of WSAG meetings dealing with the Chup and [REDACTED] operations. He expressed some concern that Admiral Moorer's briefings about the progress of the operations did not always square with the material coming from MACV. There was general agreement that it is difficult to be sure about the progress of the operations, but that we could tell that large volumes of supplies were still moving down the main routes. SAVA and OER were to collaborate on working up a better map of the route structure in the Tchepone area.

6. The discussion then turned to the general problem of reporting on South Vietnamese military operations. I brought up the subject because of the stir created last week when OCI reported, on the basis of [REDACTED] that the Chup operation was being delayed several days because of supply problems, etc. As I had learned earlier, this report caused all kinds of people to get excited. The report had slipped out without going through the proper screening process; it should have been held for 24 hours to obtain comments from MACV. [REDACTED] assured me that the report probably was accurate, even though the US military apparently boggled when they saw it. It seems that we simply must live with a situation in which there is enormous reluctance to disseminate information suggesting that US policies, particularly Vietnamization, are not going just fine. All we in OCI can do is to check out such reports as thoroughly as possible (which [REDACTED] did in this case) and then use our best judgment in handling the material. I stressed our interest in obtaining information about South Vietnamese attitudes as they go into military operations like Chup and [REDACTED] assured me that the agency would continue to get whatever it could on this subject.

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7. [REDACTED] said the first version of the Lao weekly report was now in the hands of the Director, and that he would be delivering some comments on it before long.

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Chief, Vietnam Task Force

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